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THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT, 1929

—HOW TO MAKE THE BEST OF IT.

BY

SIDNEY WEBB.

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THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT, 1929—

HOW TO MAKE THE BEST OF IT.

By Sidney Webb.

The Local Government Act, 1929, is now the Law of the Land; and the County and County Borough Councils (including the London County Council) have the duty of considering how to make the best of it for the million or more persons directly concerned as recipients of Public Assistance, and for the community as a whole.

The statute, with its 135 Sections and its appendices (Schedules), extending over 190 pages of print, falls into eight parts, which have the very slightest connection with each other. Thus, we may distinguish first (*a*) the financial provisions relating to "de-rating" and the substitution of a series of "Block Grants," according to a complicated formula, for most of the existing Grants in Aid (with the important exceptions of those for Education, Police, and Lunacy, and those received by Port and Harbour Authorities, all of which remain unaltered). These provisions, together with those relating to the financial adjustments between the Poor Law Unions and the Councils, will be gradually worked out by the Ministry of Health and the Financial Officers of each Council. The Councillors need not concern themselves with these financial details, which it is practically impossible to alter, and on which no question of administrative policy at present arises. Equally beyond the need for immediate consideration are (*b*) the sections relating to Town Planning, which are designed to make slightly more effective the law on this important subject, and (*c*) the sections making a number of detailed amendments in Local Government law and procedure, which will generally be welcomed by zealous administrators. Similarly, (*d*) any consideration of the sections reorganising the administration of the service of Registration of Births, Marriages and Deaths may be postponed. The same may be said of (*e*) Part III. of the Act, which revolutionises the service of maintenance of the highways outside municipal boundaries. Apart from consequential provisions contained in the last two parts, there remains (*f*) Part I. of the Act, which abolishes all the existing Poor Law Authorities, and transfers their powers and duties, their assets and their liabilities, to the Councils. It is this Part I. of the Act, with the Schedules relating to them, that Councillors, as administrators will for some time to come have mainly to consider.

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The first task, during the year 1929, was the framing of the "Administrative Scheme" by which each Council has had (Section 4) to provide for the assumption, on April 1st, 1930, of its own share of the gigantic work now performed by over 600 Boards of Guardians and their joint or federal bodies, including the maintenance and treatment of over a million persons receiving Poor Relief, and of the management, under new conditions, of over one thousand separate institutions, containing about a quarter of a million beds—the whole involving an addition to the annual expenditure of the Councils of something like forty millions sterling.

This "Administrative Scheme" had to be submitted by each Council to the Minister of Health before October, 1929. Many of these draft schemes were unsatisfactory, especially in regard to their failure to take full advantage of the power given by Section 5 to "break up the Poor Law," and make better provision for the persons now dealt with as paupers. Fortunately, the schemes can be amended at any time, with no greater formality than was involved in the original scheme. To this question of amendment Councillors ought now to address themselves.

It is obligatory on each Council to appoint one new Committee, the Public Assistance Committee (and, except in County Boroughs, Local Committees also). The Council may, if it chooses, include in its Public Assistance Committee co-opted members ("some of whom must be women"), up to a maximum of one-third of the whole number of the Committee. The disadvantage of having co-opted members is that their introduction brings in an element of irresponsibility to the electorate, and tends to lessen direct Democratic Control of administration, if not also of policy. On the other hand, the addition to the function of the Councils is so large that the elected Councillors may not be able to do even that part of the work that ought not to be devolved on officials. Moreover, the assistance of some of those familiar with Poor Law work, and especially of women (who might otherwise find no place on the Committee) may be of great value. Some Councils have appointed their Health Committee to be also the Public Assistance Committee, a course which can hardly be recommended in any but the smallest Authorities.

A like question arises in connection with the "local and other sub-committees" which the London County Council may appoint (Section 18), the "Guardians' Committees" which other County Councils must appoint (Section 7), and the "sub-committees" which the Council of a County Borough may appoint (Section 7 (6)). These may in all cases consist partly of persons

not members of the appointing Council. In Counties other than London the "Guardians' Committees" must consist of not less than 12 and not more than 36 members and must include (*a*) members of the County Council representing electoral divisions in the area; (*b*) members of the Councils of the Urban or Rural Districts in the area, nominated by the Councils thereof; and other persons, women as well as men, making not more than one-third of the Committee.

In the last case, where co-option is compulsory, as well as in London and in the County Boroughs where it has been adopted, every effort should be made to secure the co-option of proper persons—not exclusively from one political party, one religious denomination or one social class—who have had personal experience, either of the life of the manual-working, wage-earning household, or, at least, of the administration of Poor Relief, Care Committee, or Maternity and Child Welfare work.

The most important point of policy for the Council to decide is the action it will take under Section 5 (for London, as modified by Section 18). This provides that the Council shall "have regard to the desirability of securing that, as soon as circumstances permit, all assistance which can lawfully be provided otherwise than by way of Poor Relief shall be so provided." That is to say, the Council should *take out of the Poor Law* all the present services of the Guardians that its own powers enable it to perform under other statutes. But the Act does not compel the Council to do this immediately, or even to do it at all. The Government refused to make the Section obligatory, on the plea that some Councils might find it inconvenient to make the changes as early as April 1st, 1930. It can be done at any time by an amending Scheme; and this ought always to be kept in mind.

There can be no doubt that this "taking out of the Poor Law" of as many assisted persons as possible is, on every ground, desirable. It is in the public interest that such classes as the sick, the mentally deficient and the blind should not be merely "relieved" as paupers, but skilfully treated for their infirmities, with the sole intent of cure or amelioration. It is equally desirable that the mothers and infants, and the children and adolescents should not be introduced to the Poor Law. Pauperism is only too apt to be demoralising alike to the recipients of Poor Relief, and to all who come in contact with it. The more its volume, in each County or County Borough, can be contracted—so long as equally good provision, or better provision, is made for necessitous persons *outside the Poor Law*—the smaller the amount of demoralisation. Moreover, to get rid of the over-

lapping and duplication of rival services now existing in every County and County Borough ought to mean a positive economy for the ratepayer. Every Council already treats, assists and maintains sick persons under the Public Health Acts (which are not limited to infectious diseases); mentally defective persons under the Mental Deficiency Act; blind persons under the Blind Persons Act; infants (and their mothers) under the Maternity and Child Welfare Act; and children and adolescents under the Education Acts. Why should it maintain, at great expense, a separate and distinct public service for persons of the very same kind under the name of Poor Relief?

Thus, whatever has been done at the outset, the Administrative Scheme ought certainly to be amended as soon as possible so as to provide what is intended in Section 5, namely, that the public assistance given to all persons falling within any of the five classes above mentioned should be dealt with, *not by the Public Assistance Committee under the Poor Law,* but by the Council's Health Committee, Mental Deficiency (or Asylums) Committee, Blind Persons Committee, Maternity and Child Welfare Committee, and Education Committee respectively.

This course may possibly be still objected to by timid or reactionary officials or Councillors on certain grounds, none of which have any substantial importance. It may seem to them easier to handle, *as a whole,* the work transferred from the Boards of Guardians; and to refer it, *as a whole,* to the new Public Assistance Committee. It may be urged that any change will involve many alterations in the existing institutions of one or other sort; some shifting of their inmates; and certain readjustments of staff; all of which could hardly be completed satisfactorily before the appointed day, and never will be completed unless Councillors press for it. But it is quite a mistake to suppose that the Administrative Scheme must be carried completely into effect, at all points, and in all its details, on that or on any other day. There is nothing in the Act to require this. The Poor Law Workhouses, infirmaries and separate schools have anyhow been taken over as going concerns, and they can go on without shifting the staff or the inmates or making any change whatever, as long as the Council finds convenient. The Act has provided for this difficulty by making it clear that nothing is to affect the power of the Council to " provide relief for the poor " under the Poor Law, in the existing institutions or otherwise, just as the Guardians have hitherto been doing. Thus, whatever may be said in the Administrative Scheme, no patient (and no official) need be moved, and no institution need be changed, until the Council has completed all the necessary

preparations.* All the Administrative Schemes originally made are imperfect in one or other particular; they will all have to be amended by new schemes from time to time. The Councillors should press for early amendment.

Part II.—Assistance in Place of Relief.

Unfortunately, the new Act does not enable the Council to abolish pauperism completely by "taking out of the Poor Law" all the several classes now in receipt of Poor Relief.† Thus, the Council has no statutory powers to make any provision for necessitous able-bodied persons (not being mentally defective or certified as of unsound mind). Even its powers to provide for the unemployed through a Distress Committee, have, by the repeal of the Unemployed Workmen Act of 1905, been swept away. The Council takes over from the Boards of Guardians the absolute duty of relieving every necessitous person; and (in the absence of any statutory powers other than the Poor Law) must (except in London) deal with the able-bodied through its Public Assistance Committee; assist them only as paupers, with all the disabilities of paupers; and do for them only what the Minister of Health, by his Relief Regulation Order, 1911, specifically authorises. The Council, in short, must either admit the necessitous able-bodied poor to the workhouse, or grant them Outdoor Relief *conditional on the performance of "Test Work" however small may be the amount of relief granted.*

The fact that the Council is thus legally restricted with regard to the able-bodied does not seem a valid reason for keeping under the Poor Law the sick, the mentally defective, the blind, the mothers and infants, or the children and adolescents, for whom Parliament has now enabled the Council to provide something

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* The officials of the Ministry of Health seem to take the view that no section of paupers can be taken out of the Poor Law unless and until a Council is in a position to do what is required by such persons by different officers than those administering the Poor Law powers of the Council, and notably not until such persons can all be accommodated in other than Poor Law premises. But this does not appear to be laid down in the Act, nor to be requisite. The presence of lunatics, blind persons, children or maternity cases in a Poor Law institution does not necessarily compel them to be treated under Poor Law powers, or at the expense of the Public Assistance Committee. The Minister of Health should be asked what legal warrant he has for objection to this course.

†The large class of persons certified as of unsound mind are deliberately left unaffected by the Act, as it is intended that they shall be completely dealt with by another Statute, in the manner recommended by the Report of the Royal Commission on Lunacy, 1924-7. They are to be wholly taken out of the Poor Law, and dealt with on Public Health lines. Meanwhile, they will remain in the care of the Asylums Committee of the Council.

more appropriate than Poor Relief. The Poor Law view used to be that Poor Relief could be given only to the head of the family—the husband and father if alive—and the wife and children could not be dealt with without his being involved; usually, indeed, not without his own application on their behalf. But this is no longer the case. Wherever the husband is absent from home the wife and children are, if necessary, relieved as if there were no husband. Moreover, wherever Poor Relief to the husband is refused (on the ground, for instance, that he ought to seek employment, or that he could get it if he chose !), Outdoor Relief is now granted in many unions, where necessary, to the wife for herself and her children, without any allowance for the man. This is assumed to be on the lines of the Merthyr Tydfil Judgment, and it is not objected to by the Ministry of Health, provided that the husband is allowed the option of entering the workhouse himself if he chooses. Hence there is no longer any difficulty in assisting separately the wife and children in one way, and the husband (if at all) in another way.

The Administrative Scheme is intended by Parliament to "take out of the Poor Law" all that is being done, on the ground of destitution, by the Boards of Guardians for expectant and nursing mothers and their infants in so far as this assistance *can* already be provided by the Council, irrespective of destitution, under the Maternity and Child Welfare Act. Probably no Council yet does all that it could lawfully do under this Act. In fact, the Act expressly provides that a Council may lawfully carry out any scheme calculated to promote the children's welfare that the Minister of Health approves.

At present, Councils usually do no more than (i) offer medical examination (and sometimes any necessary treatment) for the expectant mother; (ii) provide institutional treatment for confinement; (iii) visit every home in which a birth occurs, and offer, through the Health Visitors, advice, milk, and sometimes clothing, for the infant; and (iv) invite the mothers to bring their babies regularly to the Infant Welfare Centre, sometimes right up to the age of five, for examination, weighing, advice, and sometimes treatment. What the Council does not yet do, and what the Boards of Guardians regularly do, is to grant the necessitous mother (usually a widow not entitled to any National Widows Pension under the Contributory Pensions Act, or a wife without a husband at home) a weekly payment of fifteen or twenty shillings a week, with which to rear her children. This is now granted as Outdoor Relief, with all the demoralisation and disabilities of Pauperism. It would be a thousand pities for the Council to continue this way of providing for the unpensioned

widow and her children, as Poor Relief and through the Public Assistance Committee. It would be far better (i) to include this provision of a weekly subsistence for unpensioned widows with children, in the service to be transferred under the Administrative Scheme to the Council's Maternity and Child Welfare Committee; and (ii) simultaneously to submit, for the approval of the Minister of Health, an amending scheme for Infant Welfare under the Maternity and Child Welfare Act, enabling such subsistence allowances to be granted. This would involve no increase of cost either to the Council or to the Government, and it would enable the whole service for this class of persons to be concentrated (outside the Poor Law) under one committee.

Nothing is said in the Act about the outdoor medical service of the Poor Law, in which some 4,000 part-time district medical officers give medical attendance in the homes of the necessitous sick—mainly those (i) who are, for some reason, outside the Medical Benefit of the Health Insurance scheme; and (ii) the homekeeping wives, and the children, for whom that scheme does not provide even medical attendance. This extensive and ubiquitous medical service is transferred on April 1st, 1930, to the Councils. It must be continued. What will the Councils do with it?

The institutional provision for the necessitous sick (Poor Law Infirmaries, etc.) will clearly be relegated to each Council's Health Committee, and thus be "taken out of the Poor Law." It seems to have been taken for granted in the House of Commons that the Outdoor Medical Service of the Poor Law would go with the institutional service with which it ought certainly to work in the closest association. But hardly any Council has yet systematically provided, under the Public Health Acts, a domiciliary Medical Service. It has been done, without objection, in this or that locality in this or that special case. Domiciliary nursing, too, has been extensively thus provided. In fact (as in the analogous case of Maternity and Child Welfare) the Public Health Acts enable a Council to do, *with the approval of the Minister of Health,* almost anything for the prevention and cure of disease (without limitation to infectious diseases) that is thought to be required in the public interest. Thus it seems to be open to a Council desirous of unifying and co-ordinating all its provisions for the sick poor, (i) to include in a new Administrative Scheme the association of the Poor Law District Medical Officers with the rest of the Poor Law Medical Service, and to relegate the whole of the Council's provision of medical attendance and Nursing to a single committee, naturally the Health Committee; and (ii), if this is held to be necessary, simultaneously to apply to the Minister of Health for approval of a service of domiciliary

medical treatment and nursing for the necessitous poor (under Section 133 or otherwise) of the Public Health Act, 1875.

The Poor Law "Separate" Schools and Cottage Homes should pass to the Council's Education Committee. A County or County Borough Council already has power, alike under the Education Acts and under the Industrial and Reformatory Schools Act (now embodied in The Children Act of 1908) to maintain Boarding Schools in certain cases. With the consent of the Board of Education, an Education Authority may, if it thinks fit, transform any Poor Law School into a General Boarding School, open to all children or to such children only as needed residential care, at such fees, and with such free places and scholarships as it deems advisable. It should therefore be possible under Section 5 by providing in the Administrative Scheme for the relegation of the Poor Law institutions for children of school age to the Council's Education Committee, to take these Schools out of the Poor Law and thus to release their children from the stigma of pauperism. The Council would, of course, be free to make regulations for the admission to what would have become its residential schools, of such children as it thought fit, upon such conditions of payment or otherwise as might be desirable.

But a large majority of the children of school age now maintained as paupers are on Outdoor Relief; and these, together with a small number of others in Poor Law institutions, are already attending the Council's Public Elementary Schools. Several thousand others, being orphans, are sent to these schools by the foster parents, with whom they are "boarded out" by the Guardians, at weekly payments. All these children, bereft of a mother's care, need to be continuously watched by the teachers and specially examined by the School Medical Officers. The existing powers of a Local Education Authority to give assistance towards maintenance of necessitous scholars in its day schools are large and somewhat indefinite. It would be a good thing if, by suitable provisions in the Administrative Scheme, all public assistance given to necessitous children attending the Public Elementary Schools could be concentrated in the Education Committee (which has already to provide school meals for those who need them); and thus taken out of the Poor Law altogether. Where (as in the majority of cases) the children live with their parents or with one of them, who are in receipt of Outdoor Relief to enable them to maintain such children, would it not be better for the child that he should not grow up as a pauper? He might, by a slight development of the present Boarding Out System (now applicable only to orphan or deserted children), be regarded as *boarded out with his own parents,* whom the Education Committee

would hold responsible for his proper upbringing. No child, however necessitous or negligent its parents, ought to make acquaintance with pauperism or the Poor Law.

There is one important function, not mentioned in the Act, but implicit in the new allocation of duties, namely, that of maintaining a complete Register of all the Public Assistance, of whatever kind, that is being granted by any authority whatsoever, to any member of a family. Such a Register exists, at present, only incompletely, and only in unco-ordinated fragments, not available for immediate consultation by any Commitee. For lack of such a Register one family may be receiving Public Assistance from several different sources unknown to the various committees dispensing benefits. Moreover, without a full knowledge of the family circumstances, past as well as present, it is impossible in certain cases to discover what it is best to provide for this or that member of the family, who happens to be in need of treatment or aid. The Administrative Scheme, accordingly, should be amended so as to provide for the maintenance, by the Public Assistance Committee—perhaps in charge of a special officer, for whom an appropriate title would be Registrar of Public Assistance —of a comprehensive Register of all the forms of Public Assistance administered by any of the Council's Committees and sub-Committees. Such a system of registration would enable a complete and accurate family record to be immediately available for every Committee or sub-Committee having to deal with a case.

But there is another duty which it is equally important to unify. The law compels the Council, in many cases, and allows the Council in others, to make charges on the persons whom it assists, or upon the parents or others responsible for their maintenance; and to recover from them the whole or part of the cost incurred by the Council. Nearly every Committee of the Council has to make such charges, and seeks to recover a large number of small sums. In order to prevent overlapping and decisions inconsistent one with another—in order, too, to save expense—this service ought to be concentrated in one office, and directed by a single committee. The District Auditor will, under the new Act, be vigilant in compelling the Council to seek to make these recoveries. It is for the Council to decide what sums in each case it is proper to press for. This duty might well be entrusted to the Public Assistance Committee, which would have at its disposal all the information of the comprehensive Register which it is suggested should be maintained.

London.

The complete "Break up of the Poor Law," which may be difficult for the County Boroughs and for all other counties to

secure, is, by the new Act, made easy for the London County Council. By the special Section (18) which the London County Council insisted on the Minister of Health accepting, the Council is empowered to entrust *any* of the new powers conferred upon it to *any* of its Committees. It must, indeed, like all other Councils, appoint a new Committee, the Public Assistance Committee. But, unlike all other Councils, it is not required to entrust that Committee with the administration of any part of the Poor Law.

Thus the London County Council is free, if it chooses, to delegate to its Health Committee (and not to its Public Assistance Committee) all the powers which the Metropolitan Asylums Board or the Boards of Guardians have hitherto exercised with regard to any persons requiring medical attendance or nursing, whether in respect of tuberculosis or any other infectious disease, or in respect of any non-infectious disease, or in respect of pregnancy or childbirth, or in respect of senile or any other infirmity or affliction.

The Council may direct such powers to be exercised in conjunction with any other powers possessed by the Council under the Public Health Acts or other statutes relating to the sick or infirm. It may do this alike with regard to domiciliary medical attendance and nursing, and with regard to institutional care and treatment, irrespective of whether it is done under the Poor Law or under other statutes.

Removing Poor Law Taint.

Similarly, the London County Council is free to entrust to its Education Committee (and not to its Public Assistance Committee) all the powers hitherto exercised by the Boards of Guardians, and their School District Managers, with regard to children of school age, as well as those relating to children up to 16 who are blind, deaf and dumb, or crippled. It is clear that the administration of all the Poor Law Schools, Cottage Homes and Scattered Homes should be so dealt with. The Poor Law children now " boarded out " with foster parents should equally be transferred to the care of the Education Committee.

All these children would thereby be taken out of the Poor Law, and cease to be paupers. It would be an excellent thing if a similar provision were put into the Administrative Scheme with regard to the larger number of children whom the Metropolitan Boards of Guardians now maintain on outdoor relief. These children, for the most part, already attend the Council's elementary schools. Should they not be regarded as " boarded out " with their own parents to whom the Education Committee (in succession to the Board of Guardians) would make the

necessary payments, and whom the Education Committee would hold responsible for the proper rearing of these children?

Mothers and Children.

In like manner the London County Council is free to entrust to an appropriate Committee of the Council, or to the Maternity and Child Welfare Committees of the Borough Councils, not only (like other Councils) all that has hitherto been done by Boards of Guardians for destitute mothers and their infants, but also (herein unlike any other Council) it is free to entrust to the same Committee the special provision for such persons which the Guardians have alone been able to make. The grant of food and clothing, even the grant of a weekly subsistence allowance, to expectant or nursing mothers who seek the aid of the Maternity and Child Welfare Centres could be entrusted (even if these payments have to be charged to the Poor Law account) not to the Public Assistance Committee, but to the same Committee that at present administers those centres.

Hitherto comparatively little has been done under the Mental Deficiency Act, and thousands of mentally defective persons have been left to be herded in the workhouses, or maintained on doles of outdoor relief, with the very minimum of proper treatment. The London County Council has now the opportunity, by making provision in the Administrative Scheme, for the relegation to its Mental Hospitals Committee of the *whole treatment of mentally defective persons*, of whatever age, sex, or condition, whether under the Poor Law or under the Mental Deficiency Act, of unifying an important social service.

In most of the above cases it is possible for the London County Council, by its Administrative Scheme, to take out of the Poor Law and relieve from the stigma and the disabilities of pauperism all, or nearly all, the sick and infirm, the children of school age, the expectant and nursing mothers and their infants, and the mentally deficient. (It will presently be possible to do the same for the persons certified as of unsound mind.)

The Destitute Aged.

It is certainly unnecessary to dump the old people upon a general Public Assistance Committee, and the London County Council is, at its own request, expressly not required to do so (Section 18). There remain to be dealt with in the Administrative Scheme (i) the healthy aged of either sex who have failed to get National Old Age Pensions, and whom the Guardians have hitherto maintained on outdoor relief; and (ii) the able-bodied unemployed.

Why should not the destitute aged, to whom the London County Council will certainly continue the Guardians' subsistence allowance, be entrusted, in the Administrative Scheme, not to the Public Assistance Committee, but to the Council's own Old Age Pensions Committee? That Committee could then substitute what would virtually be "County Council Pensions" (even if they have to be charged to the Poor Law account) for what the Guardians have hitherto paid as outdoor relief.

The Able-bodied.

Those able-bodied men and women, for whom the Employment Exchange can find no situations, and to whom the National Insurance Scheme refuses benefit, have now to be provided for by the London County Council, in succession to the Guardians. The Council will wish to do something better for them than the workhouse; and something less farcical than the test work that is supposed to accompany outdoor relief.

The Central (Unemployed) Body, under the Unemployed Workmen Act of 1905, is practically taken over by the Council. What is suggested is that the Council should refer the whole problem thus presented to it, together with the administration of all the statutory powers that the Council now possesses or may possess for the purpose, not to the Public Assistance Committee, but to a Special Committee on Unemployment. It is only by concentrating on the problem the attention of a specialised Committee that any wise treatment of this difficult problem can be expected.

Co-ordinating Assistance.

Even more important in London than elsewhere is the function, not mentioned in the Act, but implicit in the new allocation of duties, of maintaining a complete register of all the public assistance, of whatever kind, that is being granted by any authority whatsoever, to any member of a family in the metropolis. For lack of such a register one family may be receiving public assistance from several different sources unknown to the various Committees dispensing benefits.

Moreover, without a full knowledge of the family circumstances, past as well as present, it is impossible in certain cases to discover what it is best to provide for this or that member of the family, who happens to be in need of treatment or aid. An early amendment of the London Administrative Scheme, accordingly, should expressly provide for the maintenance, by the Public Assistance Committee—perhaps in charge of a special

officer, for whom an appropriate title would be Registrar of Public Assistance—of a comprehensive register of all the forms of public assistance administered by any of the Council's Committees and Sub-Committees.

Unify Charges.

But there is another duty of the London County Council which it is equally important to unify. As already mentioned, the law compels each Council in many cases, and allows the Council in others, to make charges on the persons whom it assists, or upon the parents or others responsible for their maintenance; and to recover from them the whole or part of the costs incurred by the Council. For the London County Council this is of special importance. Nearly every Committee of the Council has to make such charges, and seeks to recover a large number of small sums. In order to prevent overlapping and decisions inconsistent one with another—in order, too, to save expense—this service ought to be concentrated in one office, and directed by a single committee.

The District Auditor will, under the new Act, be vigilant in compelling the Council to seek to make these recoveries. It is for the Council to decide what sums in each case it is proper to press for. This duty might well be entrusted to the Public Assistance Committee, which would have at its disposal all the information of the comprehensive register which it is suggested should be maintained.

Thus, the new Local Government Act offers almost endless scope to progressive Councils, and every intelligent Councillor should press for the fullest use of the new powers.

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